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SUBJECT: USAID/OFDA STRATEGY CONSULTATIONS

SUMMARY

Begin summary. An initial series of consultations have been held in Addis Ababa Ethiopia between USAID/Ethiopia Mission and USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) staff as part of a joint effort to promote a disaster risk reduction agenda. The OFDA Director Ky Luu visited Ethiopia at the end of the period, from March 29 - April 2, 2008 to solidify some initial steps towards putting the agenda into motion. This cable summarizes the justification and logic behind the initiative. End summary.

1. Ethiopia is a country of 77 million people and growing by 3 percent per year. Despite healthy growth in the macro economy and an aggressive pro-poor agenda supported by the World Bank and major donors, including USAID, millions of Ethiopians rely every year on a safety net food program to complete their subsistence existence. Ethiopia is a country of multiple hazards. An OFDA-funded study to document the frequency and spread of hazards has revealed that in any one year, 44 percent of the country or over 200 woredas declare a drought. A similar percentage of the country is affected yearly by flooding. In conjunction with these disasters, Ethiopia experiences correlating rises in human and animal disease. The repeated disaster events erode lives and livelihoods and makes populations less and less able to resist the next shock.

2. Cumulatively since 1991, USAID has provided more than \$2.6 billion in humanitarian assistance (including food aid) of which

\$161.2 million constitute emergency assistance programs implemented by OFDA partners. OFDA supported Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART) have been deployed to coordinate the response to drought and flood emergencies in 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2006. In 2007-2008 a Humanitarian Assistance Team (HAT) is focusing exclusively on the crisis in the Somali region.

¶3. With this as background, OFDA embarked on a review of the current funding strategy in Ethiopia with a view towards making emergency interventions more sustainable specifically by linking with USAID Mission development programming. The strategy will have three broad objectives evolving from OFDA's core mandate as follows:

- (a) saving lives: responding to emergencies
- (b) reducing suffering: protecting livelihoods
- (c) reducing the economic impact of disasters: protecting development gains

¶4. Within these objectives, a disaster risk reduction approach will be developed, so that program focus will be on:

- building capacity at government, regional, local and community levels to improve early warning, planning and response to disasters;
- enhancing preparedness and response to malnutrition, and early response in the area of water and sanitation;
- funding 'crisis modifiers' within USAID mission programs. OFDA will initiate this process with funding for the Pastoral Livelihoods Initiative (PLI I) emergency response fund. The OFDA funded crisis modifier within the USAID PLI program will buffer the project against the shock to livestock emanating from the current drought in the pastoral areas of the Oromiya Region. Future 'crisis modifiers' need to be examined but are particularly relevant for the USAID health program and PSNP safety net interventions.

¶5. Further discussions and field work is needed to refine all of these key points and to begin a process of adjusting both OFDA and Mission programming but the initial pilot to be implemented immediately with the pastoral livelihood program will be a good indication for how such collaboration can be managed throughout OFDA and Mission programming in the months and years to come.

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